

UNSUNG HEROES
of Hispanic Heritage

**MARIA
ELENA
SALINAS**
LEGENDARY JOURNALIST





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CHAPTER ONE

EMBRACING TWO CULTURES



The students were still settling into their seats as Mrs. Garza wrote on the class white board: *What is your favorite holiday?* She often started class with a question like this. She said it helped everyone get into the spirit of learning for the day. It also helped her get to know her students.

“Mine is Christmas!” several students answered at once. Others chimed in that they preferred Halloween or Easter.

“Let’s remember our manners,” Mrs. Garza reminded them as she searched for a raised hand. “Martin,” she said nodding to the boy in the back row with a flat palm and five fingers in the air.

“I like Independence Day,” he said.



The flag of Mexico.

“An excellent choice,” the teacher said. “And on what date do you celebrate Independence Day?” she asked.

“September sixteenth” he replied. The other students giggled. They all knew that Independence Day was also known as the Fourth of July.

“So, you think he’s wrong?” Mrs. Garza asked. She then reminded them, “The first person to raise a hand gets to respond.” This time she nodded to girl named Gabby.

“He’s right,” Gabby said. “The United States celebrates its independence in July. But Mexico’s Independence Day is in September.”

“Good job,” Mrs. Garza replied.

“You can’t celebrate two Independence Days,” a student named Troy declared. “In America we celebrate American holidays.”



“Actually,” Mrs. Garza said, “many people in the United States also celebrate the holidays of other cultures. For example, I was born in the United States. But my family is from Mexico. We are Mexican American. We too celebrate both days.” She smiled at Martin. Then she asked Gabby, “How did you know about the Mexican Independence Day?”

“Maria Elena Salinas talked about it in an interview,” she said. “She is my favorite journalist. She also celebrates Thanksgiving and Las Posadas. That’s another Mexican holiday. It’s different from Thanksgiving. But they both include a big feast. My grandmother celebrates both of those days, too. She told me that it’s important to respect all cultures.”



Maria Elena Salinas

“Your grandmother is a wise woman,” Mrs. Garza said.

“Yes, Ma’am,” Gabby said. “She told me that I can grow up to be anything I want to be. I’m going to be a journalist like Salinas. It’s kind of like being a teacher. But instead of teaching students, I will get to educate all sorts of people with my stories.”

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